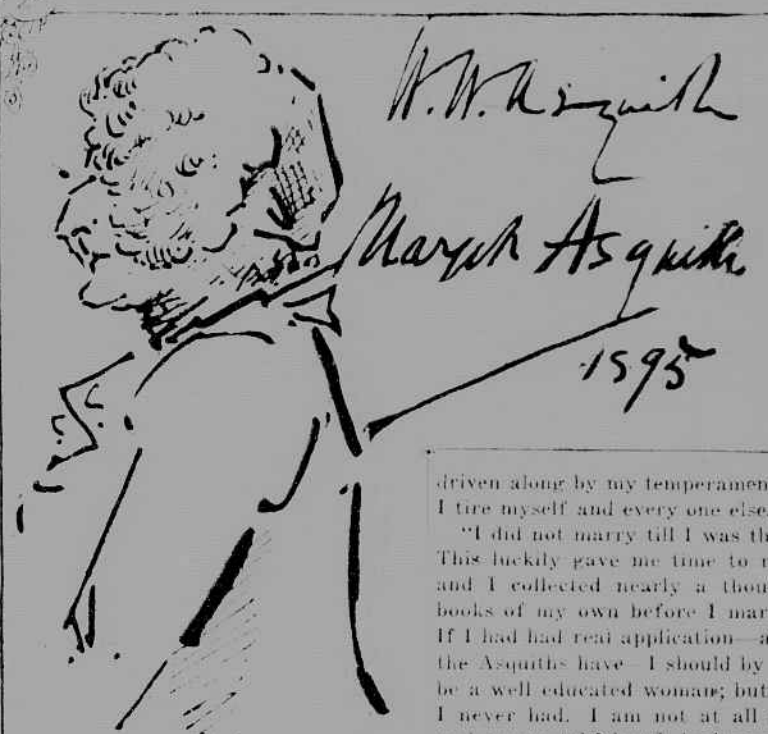


Mrs. Asquith Does Few Reputations to Death; Autobiography Spicy but Not Destructive



JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, one of Mrs. Asquith's warmest friends

MRS. ASQUITH, from
pencil drawing by the
Duchess of Rutland



THE MARCHIONESS OF
AYLESBURY, sketched
by Mrs. Asquith

driven along by my temperament till
I tire myself and every one else.

"I did not marry till I was thirty. This luckily gave me time to read; and I collected nearly a thousand books of my own before I married. If I had had read application—as all the Asquiths have—I should by now be a well educated woman; but this I never had. I am not at all dull, and never staid; but I don't seem to be able to grind at uncongenial things. I have a good memory for books and conversations, but had for poetry and dates; wonderful for faces and pitiful for names.

Her Nerve Not Gone

"Physically I have done pretty well for myself. I ride better than most people and have spent or wasted more time on it than any woman of intellect ought to. I have broken both collar-bones, all my ribs and my knee cap, dislocated my jaw, fractured my skull, gashed my nose and had five concussions of the brain; but—though my horses are to be sold next week—I have not lost my nerve. I dance, drive and skate well; I don't skate very well, but I dance really well. I have a talent for drawing and am intensely musical, playing the piano with a touch of the real thing, but have neglected both these accomplishments. I may say here in self-defense that marriage and five babies, five step-children and a husband in high politics have all contributed to this neglect, but the root of the matter lies deeper; I am restless.

"Well, I have finished; I have tried to relate of my manners, morals, talents, defects, temptations and appearance as faithfully as I can, and I think there is nothing more to be said. If I had to confess and expose one opinion of myself which might differentiate me a little from other people, I should say it was my power of love coupled with my power of criticism; but what I lack most is what Henry possesses above all men."

—equanimity, moderation, self-control—and the authority that comes from a perfect sense of proportion. I can only pray that I am not too old or too stationary to acquire these.

"P. S.—This is my second attempt to write about myself, and I am not at all sure that my old character sketch of 1888 is not the better of the two; it is more external—but, after all, what can one say of one's inner self that corresponds with what one really is or what one's friends think one is? Just now I am within a few weeks of my baby's birth and am tempted to take a gloomy view. I am inclined to sum up my life in this way:

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"An unfettered childhood and triumphant youth; a lot of love-making and a little abuse; a little fame and more abuse; a real man and great happiness; the love of children and seventh heaven; an early death and a crowded memorial service."

"But perhaps I shall not die, but live to write another volume of this diary and a better description of an improved self."

MARGOT ASQUITH's loudly heralded, eagerly awaited, much discussed autobiography has finally been made available in book form for American readers by the George H. Doran Company. Mrs. Asquith originally announced that the motto for her book would be "As Well Be Hanged for a Sheep as a Lamb" and it was generally understood that she intended to shake the social world of Great Britain to its foundations by making some startling revelations.

On the whole the book is more conservative than some of its advance notices. It is a very frank piece of self-analysis; Mrs. Asquith holds back very little of her early life and dwells on her good qualities and bad qualities at considerable length. But, while she intersperses entertaining and spicy anecdotes throughout the pages of the autobiography, she doesn't set herself up as a wholesale executioner of reputations. There are more words of praise than of blame in the work, and most of Mrs. Asquith's acquaintances who appear in its pages come off very well indeed.

Mrs. Asquith a Tomboy

Like the old-fashioned British novelists, Margot Asquith begins with a detailed account of her childhood, which was spent chiefly on the family country estate in Scotland. That she was a good deal of a tomboy may be inferred from the following passage:

"We were wild children and, left to ourselves, had the time of our lives. I rode my pony up the front stairs and tried to teach my father's high-stepping barouche horses to jump—crashing their knees into the hurdles in the field—and climbed our incredibly dangerous roof, sitting on the sweep's ladder by moonlight in my nightgown. I had scrambled up every tree, walked on every wall and knew every turret at Glen. I ran along the narrow ledges of the slates in rubber shoes at terrific heights. This alarmed other people so much that my father sent for me one day to see him in his business room and made me swear before God that I would give up walking on the roof; and give it up I did, with many tears."

Works With Factory Girls

Mrs. Asquith was profoundly grieved by the death of her sister, Laura. She sought relief in doing some sort of settlement work among the factory girls of East London. She does not explain very clearly just what form her activities took, but apparently she got on very well with the girls. They did not seem to have felt the slightest suggestion of patronage in her attitude, for when she was leaving them one of them said to her in tones of heartfelt pity: "You don't know, lady, how much we all feel for you having to live in the country. Why, when you pointed out to us on the picnic day that kind of a tower place, with them walls and dark trees, and said it reminded you of your home, we just looked at each other! 'Well, I never!' sez I, and we all shuddered!"

group and its characteristics:

"No one ever knew how it came about that I and my particular friends were called 'The Souls'. The fashionable—what was called the smart—set of those days centered round the Prince of Wales, afterward King Edward VII, and had Newmarket for its headquarters. So far as I could see there was more exclusiveness in the racing world than I had ever observed among the Souls, and the first and only time I went to Newmarket the welcome extended to me by the shrewd and select company there made me feel exactly like an alien."

One of the leading spirits among "The Souls" was the present Lord Curzon. He included most of the members of the group in a poem written in 1889, which Mrs. Asquith quotes in full. Among the people who find a place in Curzon's poem

After recovering from the shock of her sister's death Margot Asquith led a vigorous, colorful life. She was able to keep up with the best sportsmen in riding to the hounds, and she took an active part in the equally exhausting recreations of London society. The names of the most distinguished authors, politicians, society leaders, recur continually in the book. She cherishes a peculiarly warm recollection of Mr. Gladstone, whom she knew in the

are Arthur Balfour, the Earl and Countess of Weymouth, Lord d'Abernon the Earl and Countess de Grey, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Lord Ribblesdale, Lord and Lady Derbyshire. America was represented in the society by Mr. and Mrs. Henry White and the Princess Troubetzkoy. "

Meeting With Tennyson

The author met Tennyson and heard him read "Aud." Her story

of this occasion is well worth repeating:

"Tennyson's reading had the lift, the tenderness and the rhythm that make music in the soul. It was neither singing, nor chanting, nor speaking, but a subtle mixture of the three; and the effect upon me was one of haunting harmonies that left me profoundly moved.

"He began, *Birds in the high Hall-garden*, and, skipping the next four sections, went on to, *I have led her home, my love, my only friend*, and ended with:

"*There has fallen a splendid tear From the passion-flower at the gate.*

She is coming, my dove, my dear,
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near';
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late';
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear';
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

"*'She is coming, my own, my sweet; Were it ever so airy a tread, My dust would hear her and beat— Were it earth in an earthly bed; My dust would hear her and beat, Had I lain for a century dead;*

And blossom in purple and red.'

"When he had finished and pulled me on to his knee and said:

"Many have written as well as that, but nothing that ever sounded so well."

"I could not speak.

"He then told us that he had had an unfortunate experience with a young lady to whom he was reading '*Maud*.'

"*'She was sitting on my knee,'* he said, "*as you are doing now, and after reading,*

"'Bids in the high Hall-garden When twilight was falling, Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud, They were crying and calling!'


"*'I asked what bird she thought I meant. She said, 'A nightingale.'*

This made me so angry that I nearly flung her to the ground: 'No, fool! . . . Look!' said I.

*"I got up, feeling rather sorry for the young lady, but was so afraid he was going to stop reading that I quickly opened *The Princess* and put it into his hands, and he went on.*

*"I still possess the little '*Maud*' bound in its blue paper cover, out of which he read to us, with my name written in it by Tennyson."*

John Addington Symonds was a



A PHOTOGRAPH of four generations shown in Mrs. Asquith's book. In the picture are the late Queen Victoria, the late King Edward, then Prince of Wales; the present King George, and Prince Edward of Wales.

other intimate friend of Mrs. Asquith. She often visited him at his country house Am Hof, and together they read Plato's Republic and all the dialogues, Swift, Voltaire, Browning, Poe, Whitman and Schopenhauer's own Renaissance.

Friendship With Symonds. Mrs. Asquith's most serious love affair before her marriage seems to have been with a gentleman named Peter Flower, whom she met at a hunt. Peter was a sportsman and an athlete, but his bodily prowess failed to make up for his lack of the gifts of the mind and for his incurable habit of spending more than he earned. The author's account of her romance possesses all the fascination of a novel. Peter was a most impetuous lover, and developed a habit of leaping into the Asquith home at London at the moment

e of Fatuhvia

edles, and then, as the madness she ever made crept upon him, he drew back from her, held her again a fierce moment, and, dashing his cup to the earth, he turned upon her in fury.

"It was the evil noon. The eye of the sun was straight upon him, and as he cursed her and shouted that now he was free from her, the blood rushed into his face and painted there scarlet as the hibiscus the marks of the tattooing. The black *ama* the magic had erased now shone red. The stripes across his eyes and face were like the scars a burning brand leaves, and the shark of the lodge was a leper's sign upon his brow.

"*Mata!*" I cried, for I saw death in the air if he knew, and all the gifts lost to me, *'Silence!'* And the tribe heeded. No quiver, no glance showed the foreigner that one had seen what he himself had not. Tihuti fastened her gaze on him a fleeting second and then began the dance of leave-taking.

"**W**E RAISED the chant:
"Apa!
"Koaha! te Haue.
"Maui uti e ama noi!
"To the canoe we bore him, and thrusting it into the breakers, we called the last words, *'E aei aia!'*
"He was gone forever from Fatahiva. And thus I got this latter name I have, Puhī Enata, the Man with the Gun."
The old sorcerer rolled a leaf of pandanus about a few grains of tobacco.
"And you never had word of him?"
"Aoi, no," he said meditatively. "He went upon that ship to Timor. But, American, I think often that when that man who was Tihiki came to dance in his own island, to sit at his own tribe's feasts, or when he arder of love would seize him, always he studied to be calm."

Her Nerve Not Gone

"I am not pretty, and I do not know anything about my expression, although I observe it. This is particularly dwelt upon if one is sufficiently plain, but I hope, when you feel as kindly toward your fellow creatures as I do, that some of that warmth may modify an other wise bright and rather waxy countenance."

My figure has remained as it was slight, well balanced and active. Being socially conspicuous and not at all shy, I think I can come into a room as well as many people of more appearance and prestige. I do not propose to treat my self like Mr. Bernard Shaw on this account. I shall neither excuse my self from praise nor shield my self from blame, but put down the figures as accurately

"I think I have imagination, born not of fancy, but of feeling; a conception of the beautiful, not merely in poetry, music, art and nature, but in human beings. I have insight into human nature, derived not only from a courageous experience, but also from imagination; and I have a clear though distant vision, down dark, long and often divergent avenues of the ordered meaning of God. I take this opportunity of saying my religion is a vibrating reality never away from me, and this is all I shall write upon the subject.

"I have step-children and a husband in high politics; have all contributed to this neglect, but the root of the matter lies deeper: I am restless.

"Well, I have finished; I have tried to relate of my manners, morals, talents, defects, temptations and appearance as faithfully as I can, and I think there is nothing more to be said. If I had to confess and expose one opinion of myself which might differentiate me a little from other people, I should say it was my power of love coupled with my power of criticism, but what I lack most is what Henry possesses above all men

Not Afraid to Speak Truth
 "As I said in my 1988 character sketch, truthfulness with me is

"MARGOT ASQUITH.

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The Calm One of Fatuhvia

(Continued from preceding page)

silently to his pool and, lying down, he looked long into it. Then he made a wild cry, as if he had come to a precipice in the dark and been kept from falling to death by the mere gleam of fungus on a tree. He fell back, and for a little while was without mind. Awake again, he rushed about the village, clasping each one he met in his arms, rubbing noses with the girls and singing queer songs—*Jimenes te a ave*—of his island. His laughter rang in the groves. Now he was as when he had come to us, gay, kind and without deep thought.

"The gods had for that moon made him theirs, for soon came a canoe with news that a ship of his country was at Talohae. Never did a man act more quickly. He made a

A dash it took to prepare it, the pigs in the earth, the *papoi*, the fish cooked on the coral stones, the fruits and the nuts. To it he gave all his run and he handed me his gun, the paddles of his canoe and his coats.

* * *

"**B**UT Po, the devil of night, crouched for him. The canoe to take him to Talohae was in the water, waiting but the end of the *Koipa Kai*. Plentifully all drank of the rich rum, but Tokihi most. Titikahi even he had greeted, and she sat beside him. She was now loath to have him go; you know woman. She leaned against him, and her eyes promised him aught that he would. She was more beautiful than on that night when she had spurned him, and she struck from him a spark of her own willful fancy. He took her a moment to his bosom, held her as the wave holds the rock before it re-

edles, and then, as the madness she ever made crept upon him, he drew back from her, held her again a fierce moment, and, dashing his cup to the earth, he turned upon her in fury.

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hardly a virtue; but I cannot discriminate between truths that need and those that need not be told.

"With becoming modesty I have said that I am imaginative, loving and brave! What then are my faults?"

"I am fundamentally nervous, impatient, irritable and restless. These may sound slight shortcomings, but they go to the foundation of my nature, crippling my activity, lessening my influence and preventing my achieving anything remarkable. I wear myself out in a hundred unnecessary ways, regretting the trifles I have not done, arranging and rearranging what I have got to do and what every one else is going to do, till I can hardly eat or sleep. To be in one position for long at a time, or sit through bad plays, to listen to moderate music or moderate conversation is a positive punishment to me. I am energetic and industrious, but I am a little too quick; I am

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